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Traditional definitions of alienation, as found in dictionaries published more than two or three decades ago, tend to concentrate upon legalistic aspects (alienation of property, of affections and the like), and often fail to mention contemporary connotations of the term. When some approximation of the current popular usage (such as "estrangement") is given, it is usually as a subordinate meaning, of very limited importance. Newer dictionaries offer more alternatives and usually emphasize psychological and social applications, reflecting the word's evolution during the course of the present century and occasionally evincing influences of existentialist thought upon the literary context, wherein alienation now occurs with considerably greater frequency than in legal documents.

So ubiquitous are instances of alienation in twentieth century literature that numerous articles and books have been devoted to it, scholarly conferences have explored it, and contemporary man has been defined in terms of his alienation: he is the alienated man, just as his eighteenth century counterpart was the enlightened man. Spanish writers of the Generation of '98 introduced the alienated man to the peninsular novel early on in the century (Unamuno's Augusto Pérez, in *Niebla*, and Baroja's Andrés Hurtado, in *El árbol de la ciencia*, are but two of many examples in the existential or pre-existential narratives of these novelists). While certain movements or trends have from time to time displaced the *novela existencial* temporarily, it is a sufficiently significant phenomenon to figure in numerous studies as a genre or sub-genre.¹

Even in those novels not primarily of a philosophical nature, the theme of alienation appears frequently: among cultivators of

realismo social or *realismo crítico*, for example, alienation appears at times as the result of existence in an unjust (and hence alienating) society. Examples abound in the novel of adolescence, where alienation is often associated with growth and rebellion, or occurs as a reaction against "Establishment" values, against conformity or the hypocrisy of elders. Then, too, a large percentage of psychological novels treat alienated subjects; the well-adjusted Polyanna or optimistic Candide are simply not interesting as case studies.

Obviously, the listing of narratives which present varying degrees of alienation would run to many pages; even the exhaustive accumulation of sub-genre types where alienation occurs would prove tedious, and is not the purpose of the present discussion. What is purported, rather, is the examination of techniques employed by certain novelists to achieve or intensify the experience of alienation, to permit the reader to perceive and share the alienation of the literary character or situation. Those states constituting milder forms of alienation (non-conformity, eccentricity, loneliness, frustration, protest and the like) are similarly abundant, but fall beyond the scope of this investigation. Relatively intense instances of alienation are offered by the latest works of Cela, Delibes, Matute and Goytisolo (occurring in certain earlier writings as well). The present discussion emphasizes *San Camilo, 1936*,² *La parábola del naufrago*,³ *La trampa*,⁴ and *Reivindicación del Conde Don Julián*.⁵ These four novels do not necessarily offer uniformly extreme examples of alienated characters, but have been chosen on the basis of their representativity of current peninsular fiction, as well as of the relative importance of the respective authors and of the works themselves.

While novels dealing with alienation are not restricted to the contemporary period nor even to the twentieth century, the "techniques of alienation" herein discussed are not found in the works of earlier periods, or occur only to a very limited degree. This is true because only recently have writers consciously attempted to make the reader a co-creator, a full participant of the literary experience. The realistic novelist, with his relatively objective account and usually omniscient point of view, did not incorporate the reader but excluded him; the reader was cast in the role of observer of other lives — more or less exemplary or reprehensible, more or less exciting or dull, but distinct and separate. The reader

might be entertained, and upon occasion moved to laughter or tears, but would experience few, if any, of the subjective states of the characters portrayed. By contrast, many contemporary novels, including the four examined here, employ varied and complex literary techniques to enable the reader to experience confusion, fear, disorientation, alienation, fatigue, disgust, boredom, ennui and frustration. The exact means by which the reader is made to abandon the spectator's role and intervene in the literary experience might thus have many names (techniques of confusion, of disorientation, etc.) depending upon the subjective state subsumed, but these are here classed simply as techniques of alienation, not merely because the novels chosen involve alienation, but also because the reader is in effect temporarily alienated from himself in the process. He is not only estranged from self in the role of reader, but — insofar as the novelist is successful — separated from his personal *yo y circunstancia* and immersed psychologically in another, different circumstance.

This process differs from the more familiar, less sophisticated reader identification with a so-called sympathetic character, in that the techniques of alienation do not compel the reader to "identify" with the fictional personage, so much as to subsume his situation and transient subjectivity. Then, too, in many instances, the characters presented are not "sympathetic": mediocre, cowardly, inept or downright despicable, they frequently invite the reader's contempt and usually allow him some sense of superiority. Reader identification with such characters is almost automatically excluded: the average reader resists any recognition of self in these fictional personages. What the reader "identifies with" is the situation, or certain aspects thereof, experiencing in some measure the sensations or sentiments of the literary character. Such transferral and reader involvement is accomplished in a multitude of ways, varying from one author to another and from work to work within the production of a given writer. Selection of point of view is crucial to the process, and successful involvement of the reader in the literary experience seems to be facilitated by the renunciation of authorial omniscience. Such procedures are, undoubtedly, indebted in some degree to the French *nouveau roman*, and perhaps indirectly to earlier novelists such as Faulkner (who in turn influenced the later French writers). By extensive use of the interior



monolog and contrapuntal techniques, the reader is submerged within complex internal patterns of the novel, placed — by virtue of the perspective — in a position much like that of the writer, inside the story, inside the character, much as in real-life situations.⁶ Because the reader is inside the character, he never is allowed a total or objective view; he can only attempt to amplify his perspective through the combination of other viewpoints (those of other characters, or suggested by their actions and reactions), or to complete his vision of the character and situation through the accumulation of clues which the story may offer.

Physical situation of the character usually serves to emphasize and intensify alienation, with varying degrees of symbolic implications. Existential solitude is dramatized by physical aloneness, a solitary life-style. The protagonists of each of the four novels selected are essentially "loners": physical solitude is in each case the exteriorization of subjective estrangement, at once visible proof and intangible symbol of alienation. Matia (*La trampa*), having spent her life in a futile search for independence and self, is a stranger to her own child, quite literally. Her voluntary self-isolation, almost concealment, in little-used rooms of the grandmother's mansion during the present tense sequences of the novel, further manifests her alienation. In the case of the nameless narrator-protagonist of *San Camilo, 1936*, he too has chosen a rather solitary life-style, and when not wandering ceaselessly about the streets or through the brothels of Madrid, is usually seen in a sordid and disorderly little room, less a home than a cell. His separation from his family, apparently voluntary, is never explained; it is less than total, however, for the closing pages indicate some communication is possible, at least with *tío Jerónimo*. The inner conflict, or alienation from self, would seem to be more intense than in the case of Matia, and is dramatized not only by his *monodialogos*, but frequent self-confrontations and incriminations, wherein the mirror serves as stimulus and medium.

In *Parábola del naufrago*, Delibes' protagonist, Jacinto, a personality in the process of disintegration (and therefore most closely fitting the clinical definition of alienation) is seen first in a *pensión*, where he has spent most of his life essentially without family or human warmth. An orphan from an early age, Jacinto's isolation and alienation seem more the result of his rejection by others, than

his rejection of them. This sets him apart from the other three characters under examination, who have deliberately chosen estrangement and solitude. Subsequently, with the progression of his "disease," Jacinto's isolation is symbolically intensified, as he is sent to a totally solitary "refugio de recuperación," a remote cabin cut off even from the surrounding wilderness by an impenetrable hedge. The *seto*, which like Jack's beanstalk, sprang up overnight, continues to grow noisily and visibly, devouring the shrinking space separating the tiny cabin and voracious greenery. An effective barrier to Jacinto's attempts to escape and to communicate with the world beyond, it is a dramatic metaphor of alienation, an allegorical representation of the gulf between the protagonist and a society which has condemned him and in which he can no longer function.

The protagonist of Goytisolo's *Conde Don Julián*, variously called Julián, Ulyán, Bullán, and Olián, likewise has a symbolic physical situation. A voluntary exile from the peninsula, he *is* an alien, living in provisional and aimless fashion in Tangier, across the Strait of Gibraltar from the hated and obscurely loved homeland whose outlines he can occasionally perceive. This geographical and cultural separation from the visible object of his obsession, aggression and murderous desire constitutes a powerful metaphor of near-total alienation. His lack of a definitive name parallels the absence of a clearly defined personality or identity, and certain hallucinatory or fantastic episodes in the novel may well be schizophrenic interludes.

Matute, in *La trampa*, takes as her principal setting an island, with all its obvious conventional symbolism of microcosmos and of enforced separation of estrangement from the mainstream of life, its connotations of solitude, isolation, and confinement. Such impressions are further intensified by the fact that three of the four narrative consciousnesses spend the present time of the novel (that is, the action exclusive of flashbacks or retrospective material) inside a labyrinthine, forbidding mansion which is, in effect, an island within the island. In addition to Matia's voluntary retreat, another has withdrawn in order to conspire, and the third is in hiding. The fourth narrator, alone on the mainland, is locked in her darkened room, abandoned by the former lover who was her principal link to the rest of society.



Thus, novelistic settings, the physical situation or location of protagonists and/or narrators, can be seen to function on multiple levels, symbolic and causal, tending to produce and subsequently to intensify alienation, as well as to objectify the subjective sentiment.

The handling of time also becomes a technical tool for underscoring or intensifying the experience of alienation. While the temporal ambientation of each novel is unmistakably the twentieth century, the exact moment—except for *San Camilo*—is not of decisive importance. There is no doubt that each character's alienation is in some degree a product of his inability to accept and relate to his *circunstancia*, his moment in history, but there is no suggestion that any of them would have been happier in another place and time. It is not the moment itself so much as the manner in which chronological sequence is treated which contributes most to the sensations of disorientation, malaise and *enajenamiento*. The one word applicable to this procedure in all four novels would be fragmentation. Linear narration is kept to a minimum, with straightforward chronology violated in numerous ways, interrupted by flashbacks, dreams, fantasies, memories, hallucinations, repetitive or parallel scenes and incidents, free association, the use of the diary form, mental wool-gathering by the central consciousness, or techniques such as the cinematographic dissolve and fade, whereby one object of narrative focus is metamorphosed into another.

In *Don Julián*, the present time is one day, beginning with the moment the protagonist awakes and ending when he once more closes his eyes to sleep. But in effect, time and the narrative acquire a circular form, indicated even by the peculiar punctuation (almost exclusively colons), the incomplete sentences, and repetitive motives all pointing in the direction of eventual return to the beginning. Time is an eternal present, although it contains the past (via memory) and the future (via fantasy or desire). This, together with the absence of any meaningful activity by the protagonist (who spends the day in labyrinthine wanderings through the streets and his own fantasy), and the total subjectivity of time, contribute to the reader's experience of disorientation, confusion, discomfort, strangeness and alienation.

In *La trampa*, the present action occupies some three days, but again time is subjective: enormously expanded or compressed by turns, with lengthy interjections of retrospective material and omission of large chunks of the present, the chronology assumes a psychological function, to the detriment of the structural role it plays in the linear narrative. It is the reader who must supply, via induction, deduction, and his own hierarchy, the chronological sequences. The use of four narrators, each with vastly differing and partial perspectives, whose accounts do not always complete or even complement each other, increases the effect of fragmentation of time, continuity and action, enhancing the sense of disorientation, detachment, unreality, and — in a word — alienation.

Chronology in *Parábola del naufrago* is so distorted and chaotic as to render nearly impossible the fixing, even approximately, of duration of the action in the present. On one level of interpretation, present action (exclusive of lengthy flashbacks, hallucinations and fragmented retrospective reconstructions) takes place in perhaps a week. But it is equally probable that the entire work represents the wanderings of a deranged mind, a lunatic in an asylum, and hence is, in effect, totally atemporal, incapable of reduction to the logic of a normal chronology.

Present duration of the narrative is clearly established by the author in *San Camilo*, not only via the title itself and front materials, but through the use of historical dates, unequivocally fixed with the intercalation of verifiable, recorded historical events which took place between the 12th of July, 1936, and the night of July 21st. Despite such apparently realistic historicity, however, the essentially subjective focus and hermetic monolog render time unreal once more. There is no attempt to divide the book's parts in proportion to external or objective time; the events of one day may occupy a third of the total, while another, more momentous day is given short shrift indeed. Cela's selectivity almost seems to follow a reverse principle: where the traditional, historical novel selects important moments and significant events for emphasis, Cela usually chooses those which are significant only in the absurdity of their insignificance. Against the background of incipient national tragedy, he projects a maze of trivialities which all but bury the historical outbreak of the Civil War in a grotesque accumulation of low, mean or petty words and deeds. The novelist

employs a process of elongation of certain scenes and compression of others, as much in function of aesthetic impact as a means of underscoring a gamut of alienated perceptions, distorted values and jumbled sensations which all but totally obscure the meaning of events.

As suggested earlier, narrative perspective or point of view can become an extraordinarily effective technique of alienation, as well as an unusually versatile one. In *La trampa*, Matute uses four narrators, each essentially autobiographical (or first-person) in point of view, each with a very different perspective on events, and exploits the relationships between each, as well as between their narratives. It is particularly effective that the four narrators, despite sharing inevitable and even intimate contacts, never appear together before the reader, intensifying the sensation of solitude. The chapters narrated by each form separate compartments, from which no access is possible to the narrative or perspective of the other three, giving an air of futility to individual actions and suggesting the ultimate impossibility of communication. Each narrator possesses only a partial and very subjective vision of reality, with the result that the fragmentation and compartmentalization of perspectives suggest more strongly the bewilderment, maladjustment, and inability of each to apprehend that reality, imperfectly perceived.

In *Parábola . . .*, Delibes employs three distinct styles, each corresponding to a different temporal or emotional perspective. That style most resembling characteristic previous works by Delibes belongs to an impassive, if somewhat sardonic, external narrator's (third person) voice; the other two correspond to two subjective perspectives, both belonging to Jacinto, the protagonist. One represents his relatively sane, superficially adjusted self, seen largely in retrospect; the other is that of the personality in disintegration. Not only does each perspective have its own tone and style; even the punctuation (and occasionally typography) can be visibly distinguished. However, Delibes does not maintain separation of perspectives, as does Matute in *La trampa*; on the contrary, he shifts and mixes continually, efficiently producing in the reader the sense of strangeness, uneasiness and foreboding which turns first to fear and then to terror with the progressive mental estrangement of Jacinto.

In both *San Camilo* and *Don Julián*, the essential or primary perspective is that of the interior monolog, the subjective consciousness of a first-person narrator (despite the fact that the use of other persons of the verb is frequent). Both protagonists or narrative consciousnesses speak to themselves in the second person (*tú*), but this does not so much indicate the existence of another perspective as it exteriorizes the identity crisis or alienation from self within the central consciousness. Cela does not limit himself strictly to the perspective of his nameless protagonist narrator, however; the latter, if not omniscient, seems to have mastered the trick of being in more than one place at one time, witnessing and describing separate but essentially simultaneous events. The absence of plot, the frequent interruption of sequential action, and especially the obsessive nature of the wandering interior monolog, create effects of unreality and hallucinatory sensations which contribute to the experience of estrangement and alienation.

Emphasis upon the use of the present tense in all four novels likewise contributes to a sense of disorientation. Some philosophers have held that the present does not truly exist, and others, that it is void of meaning. Meaning, significance, are derived from the interpretation we give to things, but in the moment such attribution requires, present has turned to past. J. Bloch-Michel, in his essay *La "Nueva Novela"*⁷ takes note of this problem and its application in the contemporary novel:

...Las cosas sin significación, que nos rodean en un puro presente, desaparecen en el instante mismo en que surgen para dejar lugar a otras cosas igualmente sin significación, que son quizá las mismas, pero que desaparecen a su vez. Su presencia verdadera no consiste más que en el sentido que su pasado y su futuro les añaden y en cuanto nos inspiran apego, esperanza, temor o disgusto. Al escribir en presente de indicativo, los autores de nuevas novelas han escogido sin equivocarse el tiempo que, en la conjugación, está naturalmente colmado de presencia, pero vacío de significación. (p. 64)

Significantly, the critic just cited terms the literature he is describing "la literatura del hastío." *Hastío*, together with the sensation of absence of meaning, is another contributing factor in the reader's experience of alienation.



Clearly, characterization is also an important, complex and potentially direct technique of alienation, contributing to the overall atmosphere of the literary experience even in those cases where the reader feels revulsion for the character portrayed. In all four novels, significant primary and secondary characters are both alienated and alienating. None is a personality with whom the reader can really identify, even though their experiences often have a ring of familiarity. Central to the non-identification is merciless exposition and dissection of weaknesses by the novelists, which not only prevents any admiration for the character, but also makes it impossible to accept his rationalizations, and difficult even to reserve judgment.

Needless to say, none of the significant characters is happy; none is religious in any recognizable sense; none is successful in the business of life; none has a goal or specific direction, except for Julián's vague, apocalyptic fantasy of another, supremely destructive Moorish invasion of Spain. None have close or meaningful personal relationships; all are orphans or have been long separated from their families, the ties eroded by atrophy or estrangement. Their daily contacts are largely superficial, frequently shrouded in hypocrisy or cloaked by a protective façade. Their relationships with others, sometimes desperate, are rarely honest or satisfactory. Excepting Jacinto, the characters display large doses of selfishness and egocentrism, with varying degrees of self-awareness and cynicism. They are skilled in self-deception, all more or less aware of the absurdity of their own existence and skeptical of the meaning of existence in general — again excepting Jacinto, whose attempts to formulate questions as to the ultimate purpose of things, combined with his altruism, contribute directly to his destruction.

There is sufficient irony in the portrayal of monumental self-deception to effect reader distancing (the reader's refusal to identify with the character). The most positive sentiment inspired by any of the protagonists is pity. Distancing occurs as the result of combined novelistic distance (the novelist's own lack of sympathy and affection for his character), the negative reader reaction to the character, and the ironic sense of superiority experienced when the reader feels scorn or contempt for the obvious self-deception or weakness of the character. The alienating effect

of unreal time-space ambientation probably enhances the distancing.

Despite the distancing, there is an immediacy in presentation of the character to the reader, essential self-presentation of the character via words, actions and thoughts, as opposed to exposition by an omniscient author. From such data, often self-contradictory, readers must construct a personality, much as must be done for the chronology of many such novels. Available data are sufficient to predetermine the reconstruction of a character alienated not only from society but also from himself, a self-alienation clearly evident in Jacinto's pathologically low self-esteem, Matia's endless search for love and self, and the identity crises of the protagonist-narrators of *San Camilo* and *Don Julián*. Symbolic, protean characters, their ultimate function is to personify conflicts inherent in Spain's social structure, although they have independent existence as individuals. Nonetheless, Julián's multiple identity is evident both in his varied names and his frequent dissolves into other personalities, fantastic metamorphoses which indicate that he is the modern Iberian equivalent of EveryMan. A parallel, if inverse procedure is used in *San Camilo*, where the protagonist's insistent litany of names that he is *not* ("tú no eres Napoleón, ni el rey Cirilo de Inglaterra") serve ultimately to raise doubts as to who he *is*, as do his repeated confrontations with dim and foggy mirrors.

Further contributing to the reader's sensation of alienation is the fact that, little or none of the narrative appears directed to the reader (even though the latter be essential to the creative process); readers are excluded on the emotional level by the impossibility of identifying with the characters, on the narrative level by the characters' habits of talking to themselves, and still further by the invisibility and impassibility of the novelist, who no longer speaks to the reader. Matia's use of the diary in *La trampa* likewise specifically channels and limits reader involvement.

While it would appear evident from the foregoing that the reader's experience of alienation and related sentiments is a prime objective for these four novelists, it would be erroneous to conclude that is an end in itself. Just as alienation is a long-term result of individual discontent with society and with self, so are these four eminently alienated novels, wherein the portrayal of



alienation serves not only an aesthetic but also a critical function. That criticism is directed ultimately at society, with the individual — notwithstanding his defects and limitations — seen either as a symptom or a victim. Thus, the techniques developed by cultivators of the *nouveau roman* for largely aesthetic reasons have been adapted by novelists in Spain to other ends, as was *objetivismo* in its day. Rather than pure experimentation with the possibilities of the literary experience, techniques of alienation in the hands of Spanish novelists have become the vehicle for a message.

NOTES

¹ While exhaustive studies and compilations are lacking, two examples of the persistence of "existential" trends are found in recent works of Gonzalo Sobejano (*Novela española de nuestro tiempo*, Madrid: Prensa Española, 1970) and of Gemma Roberts (*Temas existenciales en la novela española de postguerra*, Madrid: Gredos, 1973). The former volume is divided essentially into two parts, "Novela existencial" (wherein Cela, Laforet and Delibes receive special attention), and "Novela social." The latter concentrates upon five themes, the first of which is *enajenación*, analyzed in six novels.

² Camilo José Cela, *Vísperas, festividad y octava de San Camilo del año 1936 en Madrid*. Madrid: Alfaguara, 1969.

³ Miguel Delibes, *La parábola del naufrago*. Barcelona: Destino, 1969.

⁴ Ana María Matute, *La trampa*. Barcelona: Destino, 1969.

⁵ Juan Goytisolo, *Reivindicación del Conde Don Julián*. México: J. Mortiz, 1970.

⁶ Laurent LeSage, *The French New Novel* (Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1962) describes the functioning of this process in the *nouveau roman*.

⁷ J. Bloch-Michel, *La "Nueva Novela,"* Madrid: Guadarrama, 1967. Translation by G. Torrente-Ballester of the 1963 Gallimard original.



